

AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION:

The specification has been amended as follows: Underlines indicate insertions and ~~strikeouts~~ indicate deletions.

Please replace the paragraph at page 3, lines 17-20, with the following new paragraph:

“Figure 1: Amino acid sequence comparison of human NEP (SEQ ID NO: 1), PEX (SEQ ID NO: 2), KELL (SEQ ID NO: 3) and ECE1 (SEQ ID NO: 4) peptidases. Amino acid sequences in boxes are those used to design the oligonucleotide primers. Numbers and arrows under the sequences identify the primer and its orientation.”

Please replace the paragraph at page 3, line 21, with the following new paragraph:

“Figure 2: Sequences of the oligonucleotide primers used in the PCR reactions (1A: SEQ ID NO: 5; 1B: SEQ ID NO: 6; 2A: SEQ ID NO: 7; 2B: SEQ ID NO: 8; 3: SEQ ID NO: 9; 4: SEQ ID NO: 10; and 5: SEQ ID NO: 11).”

Please replace the paragraph at page 3, lines 22-23, with the following new paragraph:

“Figure 3: Nucleotide (SEQ ID NO: 12) and amino acid (SEQ ID NO: 13) sequence of the mouse NL-1 cDNA. The sequence of the DNA fragment obtained by PCR is in brackets.”

Please replace the paragraph at page 3, lines 24-25, with the following new paragraph:

“Figure 4: Partial nucleotide (SEQ ID NO: 14) and amino acid sequence (SEQ ID NO: 15) of the human NL-2 cDNA. The sequence of the DNA fragment obtained by PCR is in brackets.”

Please replace the paragraph at page 3, lines 26-27, with the following new paragraph:

“Figure 5: Partial nucleotide (SEQ ID NO: 16) and amino acid sequence (SEQ ID NO: 17) of the human NL-3 cDNA.”

Please replace the paragraph at page 3, lines 28-29, with the following new paragraph:

“**Figure 6:** Amino acid sequence comparison of NEP (SEQ ID NO: 1), NL-1 (SEQ ID NO: 13), NL-2 (SEQ ID NO: 15) and NL-3 (SEQ ID NO: 17) peptidases.”